

Like many other Members of Congress, the month of August is a time to get our boots on the ground and to hear what folks are thinking back at home. This week, I met with dozens of constituents in the district offices and at events. I've also had the opportunity to get an update on the status of the James River Ghost Fleet and to speak with members of the healthcare coverage underwriter's community. I'm also looking forward to inviting folks out to my own townhalls on healthcare reform at the end of the month.

First, this past Monday I joined with Kevin Tokarski, associate administrator for national security with the U.S. Maritime Administration as well as other state and local officials to discuss the disposal of reserve ships in the James River moored near Fort Eustis. There is a clear and present concern that these ships, which still contain fuel, could begin leaking in the event of a natural disaster.

Currently, there are 27 ships moored on the James River, and we have been successful in reducing the risk to the Bay by offloading 85% of the fuel since 2001. Luckily, we've also been able to scrap at least nine ships a year since 2001, and I am working to make sure we continue to fund the Ship Disposal Program in order to maintain this progress.

Next, on Wednesday I joined with Democratic Rep. Glen Nye, whose district abuts mine, to speak with healthcare coverage underwriters on the pending healthcare legislation before Congress. While I was glad to continue a bipartisan effort towards discussing reform efforts, I was most struck by the civility and thoughtfulness displayed by participants. Given so many news reports displaying heated concerns over reform, this was a refreshing event. Neither party has a monopoly on ideas, and I'm committed to ensuring all ideas are heard in a balanced manner.

In fact, I would like to invite all citizens of the First Congressional District to join me in a townhall-style discussion on the debate over healthcare reform. Below are the dates when I will be having these events, and I look forward to seeing you there:

Date: Monday, August 31st

Time: 6:00PM to 8:00PM

Location:

Christopher Newport University

Ferguson Center for the Arts, Music & Theatre Hall

1 University Place

Newport News, VA

Date: Tuesday, September 1st

Times: 6:00PM to 8:00PM

Location:

University of Mary Washington

Dodd Auditorium

1301 College Avenue

Fredericksburg, VA

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*